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Article 10 of 50

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Federal court will give computer access to cases - Logan General case first shown in early stages of program

Charleston Daily Mail; Charleston; Oct 30, 1998; [REBECCA CATALANELLO](#);

Start Page: 13A

Abstract:

People who would like to view federal **court case documents** real- time from their home or office computers without trudging down to the courthouse soon may have the opportunity.

A public-access computer program allowing people to retrieve complete **court documents** is being installed in Charleston federal court. While the project is still in its formative stages, at least one case should be available for people to view by early next week.

Using a computer software program called RACER (Remote Access Electronic Records), clerk officials are scanning in documents the public can then retrieve from their personal computers.

Full Text:

Copyright Charleston Newspapers Oct 30, 1998

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Using a computer software program called RACER (Remote Access Electronic Records), clerk officials are scanning in documents the public can then retrieve from their personal computers.

Though the service is not available over the Internet, people who would like to sign up at the federal clerk's office for the service will be assigned a logon name and password. They then can use the program by directing their personal modems to phone in to the courthouse server.

"The nice thing about this system is that it can enhance our service to the public," U.S. District Bankruptcy Clerk Samuel Kay said Thursday.

He said the system is being used in at least 30 courts nationwide.

The first case being put on the Charleston system is the voluminous Logan General Hospital Chapter 11 bankruptcy case filed in court last Thursday.

"It's a big case with a lot of parties involved," said Systems Manager Chris Daniel.

Daniel has been involved in the planning and installment of the software program, which cost less than \$10,000, since the clerk's office began looking into the system at the end of last year. Startup was originally planned to be earlier, but the federal courthouse's mid-May move to its new facility delayed the system's installation.

Daniel said the Logan General case came along at the same time the courthouse was ready to install the system, and because of its high visibility, was the perfect guinea pig.

Users who call up the system can view the entire case docket, click on a document description, and view the document just as though they were physically flipping through the file.

RACER differs from the current PACER (Public Access Electronic Records) system installed about 1990 in that viewing a RACER screen is like viewing an actual picture of the document. The older PACER system takes longer to view and gives only summaries of what documents are about.

Once the system is in place, people who would like to view the Logan case from their home computers may do so for free. While the clerk's office does expect to begin charging per minute for the server access, Kay said he would like to have more cases posted before the office begins charging the public.

Eventually, all cases - criminal, civil and bankruptcy - will be available through this service. Use of the older PACER system currently costs the public 50 cents per minute.

Daniel expected the computer access may relieve some of the legwork required by clerk's office employees who run to the copy machine every time one of the hospital's 2,507 creditors enter the office looking to see copies of the file.

Last year, a similarly large case involving Hecks Inc. required the clerk's office to have one to two people dedicated to making copies and answering questions about the file.

Under the new RACER system, Daniel estimates scanners with a scanning capacity of 40 pages per minute will save clerk employees' time. Users also theoretically will be provided with instant access because documents will be scanned as soon as they are filed in the clerk's office.

Samuel Kay said he does not expect the system to require the office to hire any new employees, but at least six to eight scanners will be installed at employee work stations where document filing is already a part of clerk employees' daily duties.

Other courts around the county that have used the system have also been successful putting the files on the Internet. Daniel said the Charleston courthouse has made no immediate plans to do so, but he expects the district court may eventually be online.

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West Group Expands Online Strategy and Product Line

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Abstract:

West Group, a provider of information to the US legal market, has made several announcements regarding its strategy for the future, new agreements with companies to provide more information to customers, and new products. West Group has announced its online strategy for 1998 and beyond. The strategy announcement coincided with the release of westlaw.com, a functional, comprehensive legal research source on the Web. Also West Group has also announced an expansion of its focused product development strategy with the release of 3 new WESTLAW PRO products. West Group has reached separate agreement with CCH Inc., a provider of tax and business law information, and Tax Analysts, a nonprofit provider of information for tax professionals, to distribute their publications on WESTLAW, West Group's online legal and business research service. CourtLink dockets are now available exclusively on WESTLAW.

Full Text:

Copyright Information Today, Inc. May 1998

West Group, a provider of information to the U.S. legal market, has made several announcements regarding its strategy for the future, new agreements with companies to provide more information to customers, and new products.

Expanded Online Strategy

West Group has announced its online strategy for 1998 and beyond. The strategy announcement coincided with the release of westlaw.com, a functional, comprehensive legal research source on the Web. Also unveiled is a new signature for WESTLAW and the WESTLAW family of products.

"The online strategy of West Group is to develop products and solutions for our customers that build on the traditional strengths of WESTLAW," said Andrew Prozes, West Group executive vice president and chief operating officer of West Online. "The traditional strengths of WESTLAW content, enabling technology, and customer support. Looking into the future, our online strategy will also depend on the Web."

According to the company, the new signature further symbolizes the transformation of WESTLAW to a global supplier of electronic data. "The sweeping, elliptical nature of the new signature highlights the unique ability of WESTLAW to provide a continual flow of accurate, fresh, and exhaustive information," said Prozes. "West Group is focused on the future, and our new WESTLAW signature better reflects that commitment."

The major product announcement supporting West Group's online strategy is westlaw.com. Martin noted, "westlaw.com is the most important strategic product line West Group will launch this year. With it, our customers will recognize West Group as the true provider of choice for online legal and business information."

West Group's online strategy will also lay the groundwork for future needs of professionals wanting more and more electronic information, according to the announcement. For example, West Group expects an increasing number of law firms to use intranets to convey a variety of information within their firms. Intranet services from West Group will allow customers to enhance that application by providing active links from local content to WESTLAW content, says the company.

New PRO Strategy Products

West Group has also announced an expansion of its focused product development strategy with the release of three new WESTLAW PRO products. WESTLAW PRO (Predictable Research Online) products provide users with research capabilities tailored to their specific needs through access to targeted information essential to their jurisdiction and practice. According to the company, the three new topical products, WESTLAW Tax PRO, WESTLAW Commercial Law PRO, and WESTLAW Environmental Law PRO, are designed to serve the specific needs of solo practitioners and smaller law firms, and are offered at a low fixed monthly rate.

Information flexibility is a key element of the WESTLAW PRO series, according to the company. In addition to core content, subscribers have the option of adding additional databases to serve specific practice needs. While product content is focused on specific topics, PRO subscribers also get exclusive WESTLAW features, including the timesaving Key Number functionality, enriched synopses and headnotes, and WESTLAW Is Natural (WIN) plain-English searching.

Tracy Scott, vice president of marketing and segment operations for West Online said West will expand the WESTLAW PRO line in the coming year, launching products targeting such practice areas as insurance. "We now offer more than 60 PRO products tailored to specific practice areas and jurisdictions."

WESTLAW Tax PRO offers users unlimited access to federal tax cases, Internal Revenue Code, tax regulations, IRS releases, Revenue Rulings, Revenue Procedures, Private Letter Rulings, and more. Tax cases from any or all 50 states and the District of Columbia can be added for an additional monthly fee, while state tax administrative decisions and administrative guidance materials are also available for most states.

The WESTLAW Commercial Law PRO set features unlimited access to federal commercial law materials, including cases, statutes, rules, administrative materials, state cases, public records, commercial law texts and periodicals, and daily reports of current developments. The authoritative Uniform Commercial Code Series treatise by William D. Hawkland, filled with complete interpretation and analysis of each section of the code, is also available for an additional monthly charge.

The databases included in WESTLAW Environmental Law PRO offer a wide range of federal environmental law materials, among them federal environmental law cases, statutes, legislature history, and administrative materials. Environmental law cases from any or all of the 50 states and the District of Columbia can be added for an additional monthly fee. Agreements with Tax Publishers

West Group has reached separate agreements with CCH INCORPORATED (CCH), a provider of tax and business law information, and Tax Analysts, a nonprofit provider of information for tax professionals, to distribute their publications on WESTLAW, West Group's online legal and business research service.

The agreements, which grant West Group worldwide licenses to include CCH and Tax publications as an integral part of WESTLAW, represent significant steps in West's ongoing expansion of its online tax product, according to the company.

CCH publications will be added to the collection of case law, statutes, regulatory materials, and news and business information already on WESTLAW. The agreement covers such publications as CCH's flagship product, The Standard Federal Tax Reporter, as well as other major publications for which the company is known such as CCH Federal Tax Guide, CCH State Tax Reporters, and CCH State Tax Guide.

The initial release of Tax Analysts' publications on WESTLAW includes Tax Notes Today, a collection of tax news and full-text tax documents from Congress, the IRS, and the courts, available each business day; State Tax Notes, a daily full-text report on state tax developments, including legislative changes and administrative decisions and regulations; Worldwide Tax Daily, a daily compilation of international news and full-text documents such as tax treaties and statutes.

Federal District Court Docket Materials

CourtLink dockets are now available exclusively on WESTLAW, giving attorneys a new tool to follow federal court documents from complaint to judgment, directly from their desktops.

Denis Hauptly, senior director of product development for West Online, said CourtLink lets attorneys use WESTLAW to track cases from start to finish for every federal district court. With CourtLink, attorneys can discover names of parties, attorneys of record, judgments, filing fees, and conference dates. CourtLink provides day-to-day listings of all docket entries, and also gives specific ordering numbers for retrieving documents.

Exclusive WESTLAW access to CourtLink databases gives attorneys an important shortcut for retrieving docket information while online tracking and minimal offline printing fees for docket information result in significant cost savings, according to the company.

Later this spring WESTLAW also will add Federal Index, New York State, Federal Bankruptcy Courts, and Federal Circuit Courts of Appeal from CourtLink, says West Group.

32-Bit Desktop Environment

The new 32-bit version of WESTMATE gives users new power and ease-of-use when conducting research on WESTLAW, according to the company. WESTMATE for Windows 95 and Windows NT combines familiar Windows 95 features and functions with advanced capabilities, delivering enhanced performance, navigation options, and applications compatibility when searching WESTLAW databases. The company says this new WESTLAW search interface-West Group's first 32-bit application-is compatible with Microsoft's full suite of business applications, and can also support enhanced color,

graphics, and screen presentations that are increasingly common in electronic information publishing. The 32-bit architecture provides a robust, future-proof foundation while offering a familiar Windows "look and feel" consistent with other Windows applications, he added.

Other features include the following:

Right mouse button pop-up menus

Tabbed folder dialog boxes

Long-filename support

Context-sensitive Help system

Ability to multi-task with other applications

Source: West Group, Eagan, MN, 800/778-8090; Fax: 612/687-5588; [http:// www.westgroup.com](http://www.westgroup.com).

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